



Saving Classical Music

A Manifesto for 21st Century Classical Concerts by Bruno Forment

1. A concert is an event, happening in time and place. One will need to (re)consider the effects of the chasm between each composition's premiere and the actual performance conditions. Any attempt at bridging this gap - from 'authentic' reconstruction to deliberate anachronism - should be indicated more clearly and taken into full account. Resulting from this is a higher consciousness of classical music as a performance art (much more than an 'entertainment'), endowed with a historicity. The key-stone of the classical concert - the tense relation between the composer's intentions and the performer's interpretation - thus needs to be emphasized and explained to the public.

2. When understanding the performative dimension of the concert, one will also pay more attention to the communicative aspect of this particular artistic medium. Leaflets, tickets, booklets and introductions are a necessary complement to the performance itself. Well-designed posters, neatly looking auditoria and informative introductory notes should attract a larger audience than dodgy ones. Announcements on radio, television, newspapers and internet also enhance the reception of concerts. It is therefore necessary for the cultural policy to point its finger to any negligence of classical music by the mentioned media in their programmes.

3. Highly developed individuals create and perform classical scores as testimonies of their personality and 'condition humaine'. For that reason, classical music is a true pillar of humanism. As any anti-humane attitude - going from racism and warfare up to the overgeneralization of quantitative (economic) rules in society - is hardly compatible with humanism, it is even less compatible with classical music or art in general. It goes without saying that classical music may not be misused (anymore) by persons striving for individual power or enrichment. Classical music stands above populism, fashion and pulp culture, with its hit parades and short-lived trends. Any demonstration of individual or common interests, different from the composer's, as well as systems which are one-sidedly based on the relationships between offer and demand, should naturally be dismissed. A continuous exploration and revaluation of forgotten musical treasures may become the happy outcome of this attitude.

4. An important role herein is played by education and scientific research. The deplorable erosion of humanistic culture in nowadays' classrooms should be halted. Indeed, utilitarian views will always be hard to combine with apparently redundant topics, such as aesthetics or classical languages. Nevertheless, these topics form an all too necessary part of collective memory. Erasing classical music studies from school programmes under the banner of 'lack of time and money' equals demolishing human heritage and desecration of graves. Besides, the

models of composers and performers, alive or dead, are the ideal and steadfast companions to human beings of all ages in their quest for personality and depth.